

Beecher Bible and Rifle Church
Wabaunsee Vicinity, Wabaunsee County
Kansas

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HABS No. KANS-14

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

"BEECHER BIBLE and RIFLE CHURCH"HABS
KANS
99 WABAUStreet Address: Webaunsee, KansasPresent Owner: The Congregational ChurchPresent Occupant: NonePresent Use: Church

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a typical stone church dating in the Civil War Period where the famous abolitionish Henry Ward Beecher preached.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and Subsequent owners: The Congregational Church
2. Date of erection: 1862 (Kansas State Historical Society, Kansas Historical Quarterly, Summer 1957, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, Topeka, Kansas, p. 175)
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: The stone mason was Robert Banks, a resident of the region since 1855, and later a member of the colony. (Federal Writers Project, Kansas, A Guide to the Sunflower State, Hastings House, N.Y., 1949, p. 347)
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No plans were located. "All of the members co-operated in the work; even the women had a part, mixing mortar and helping in other ways". (Whittemore, Margaret, Historic Kansas, A Centenary Sketch-book, The University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, 1954, p. 125) They "carried with them a small saw-mill." (Redpath, James and Hinton, Richard J., Handbook to Kansas Territory and the Rocky Mountains' Gold Region, J.H. Colton, N.Y., 1859, p. 84).
5. Notes on alterations and additions: None
6. Important old views and references: None located

- B. Historical Events Connected with structure: This church was organized in 1857 by settlers from New England and the building was dedicated in 1862. The church, Congregationalist, takes its name from the "Beecher Bibles" (in reality Sharp's carbines) which were furnished Free-state settlers who came to Kansas to

combat Pro-slavery sympathizers. The famous abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, collected money for the arms and they were shipped to the Kansas Territory in boxes labeled "Bibles".

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Records of the Church.

Prepared by J. P. Nofflinger date 7/58

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This church has qualities which are similar to New England churches of the 1830's and has an interesting, though simple, interior.
2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in good condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: not recorded
2. Foundations: Native stone
3. Wall construction: Wall construction if of native limestone. Cut stone quoins are utilized. There is a projecting water table.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc: The wood frame structure at the entrance is an addition.
5. Chimneys: There is one brick chimney near the center of the building which rests on a wooden post in the interior-stove pipes were lead from this stack to stoves along the side walls.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The doorways have stone lintels and thresholds with wood frames. The doors are of paneled wood and may be original.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows have cut stone lintels and sills with wood frames. Pegged construction is used and they are of the sash type. The shutters appear to be original - pegged construction - in fair condition.

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7. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with modern covering (shingles).
- b. Cornice, eaves: A box cornice is used along the sides of the building and a very simple molding is used.
- c. Dormers, cupolas: None

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: There is a small vestibule at the entrance which contains a stair to the choir loft. The main room is rectangular and is divided in the center to separate the men's side from the women's.
2. Stairways: One stairway from the vestibule to the choir loft and thence to the attic.
3. Flooring: The floor appears to have been replaced.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls were plastered. The ceiling was tongue and groove wood but was being covered at the time of this report with an acoustical material.
5. Doorways and doors: Not in place at the time of this report.
6. Trim: Wood tongue and groove with a beaded molding was used along the side walls.
7. Hardware: The hardware is probably original.
8. Lighting: No original lighting remains.
9. Heating: At the time of this report the heating elements were dismantled but 2 old stoves were sitting in the yard.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: On a level lot - in a church enclosure with the front of the building facing north.
2. Enclosures: A metal fence runs across the front of the lot.
3. Outbuildings: There are several frame buildings to the rear of the lot.

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4. Walks, driveways, etc: A Modern concrete walk leads from the road to the entrance.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc: A few trees exist on the lot.

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